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# The Church Conference on African Affairs

## The Indigenous African Church

A Paper prepared by the Students in the Africa Department  
of the Kennedy School of Missions, Hartford, Conn.,  
under the direction of Dr. Edwin W. Smith,  
as a preliminary document



OTTERBEIN COLLEGE  
WESTERVILLE, OHIO

June 19-25, 1942

# THE INDIGENOUS AFRICAN CHURCH

## INTRODUCTION

"It is the Gospel of Christ which we are to give to others and not our particular form of Christianity."

The Madras Conference, from whose Report we take this illuminating statement, could find no warrant, whether in Holy Scripture or in the history of the Church, for the notion that Christianity must everywhere assume an identical form. The Gospel is the divine seed that is put into the soil, which is the heart of mankind. The seed is good, fruitful, and the same everywhere. The soil is also essentially the same everywhere, but its precise character in any locality is determined by the various elements which it contains. In other words, what is in the heart of man depends upon his biological and social heritage which largely differs from clime to clime. It is no more strange in the spiritual world than it is in external nature that the harvest which we reap on the field bears marks not only of the seed, but also of the soil.

The Conference offered a warning when it pointed out that there may be forms of Christianity which do not truly represent the Gospel. "Nevertheless," it declared, "it is not in principle wrong or illegitimate that there should be, as interpretations of the one Gospel, many forms of Christianity."

Our particular American or European forms of Christianity are shaped according to the racial genius and cultures of the Western world—in accordance with our biological and social heritage. To impose those forms upon other peoples would be a kind of spiritual imperialism that is contrary to the due respect for humanity which is inherent in our Christian faith. Each nation, we believe, has its own contribution to make to the universal Christian fellowship of the future. "They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it"—the City of God. The Redeemer's crown will be made of many jewels, of diverse color, shape and lustre; yet all alike reflecting his glory.

Various forms of Christianity take shape in indigenous Churches.

The Madras Conference described an indigenous Church in these terms:—

1. It is rooted in obedience to Christ; in the Christian heritage and fellowship of the universal church.

2. It spontaneously uses forms of thought and modes of action which are natural and familiar in its own environment. It will bear witness to the Gospel in a direct, clear and close relationship with the cultural and religious heritage of its own country.



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The object we have set before us is to think out the implication of these general principles with particular reference to Africa. We propose such questions as these: Can Christianity find a true home in African soil? What (to use the phrasing of Madras) are the valuable African cultural elements which ought to be preserved and integrated into the life of the new African Christian community from its very beginning? In other words we are inquiring into the possibility and advisability of an Africanate "edition" of Christianity. In other words again: We are examining the case for the indigenization of Christianity in Africa: or—if you will—for the Africanization of Christianity.

We desire at the outset to disclaim in the most emphatic manner any intention of formulating a scheme that shall be imposed upon Africans by external authority. It is fundamental to our thought that African Christians themselves, guided by the Spirit of God, will ultimately decide what external form their Christianity will take, what interpretation they will give to the Christian Gospel, what traditional customs are compatible with the truth as it is in Jesus. But we also recognize that the missionary has a part to play in moulding the Christian Church in Africa. The day is, in most parts of Africa, still distant when his instruction, direction, counsel will no longer be required. Perhaps he may help the African to understand himself and the values in his heritage. We know there are African Christians whose minds are exercised as to the very subjects we are here discussing. We are convinced that, at the least, a missionary should not put obstacles in the way of Africans who are seeking to discover the will of God for themselves and their people: we wish rather to coöperate with the Africans in that process. We desire to be prepared by sympathy and knowledge to counsel and guide where counsel and guidance are sought. Our immediate purpose is to formulate our own thoughts and then to submit the results of our thinking to the judgment of the Conference.

The principles laid down at Madras are not entirely new, but we are aware that in some quarters they are regarded as revolutionary. We have to be prepared for possible opposition from those who hold a different view. Where the church is already deeply rooted, any innovation may be resented and indeed might prove impossible. Yet for the most part the Church is young and it is not too late for it to make adaptations such as we may suggest.

A word may be said as to the manner in which this paper has been composed. Our class, including men and women who have already served in Africa, divided into groups to each of which was assigned one of the five topics dealt with, viz., doctrine, worship, organization, education, social customs. The result of their studies was presented

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to, and discussed by, the entire class; and the findings were finally summarized by an editorial sub-committee.

### I. DOCTRINE

The questions now to be discussed are these: How far, both in presenting the Gospel to Africans and in expressing the faith of the Church, is it legitimate and wise to use African categories of thought? While remaining loyal to the doctrine of the Universal Church as expressed in the great Creeds, to what degree should emphasis be laid on those phases of truth which make the strongest appeal to the African mind?

Research has corrected the ancient idea that Africans have no religion of their own or that it is nothing but a farrago of debased superstitions. Three phases of religious faith may be detected in the many variations found in pagan Africa: three phases which may conveniently be summed up in the words, theism, spiritism, dynamism. They may exist side by side in the same tribe.

There is, first, a more or less distinct awareness of the existence of a Creator, who is active primarily in the cosmic sphere, in the rain and thunder, but who has some relation to the life of man. African myths tell of how he moulded the world, and how he brought man into being. Some would say that he instituted the laws and customs which rule human conduct. There is a widely spread belief that at the beginning of things the Creator lived in close association with mankind, but that owing to the fault of somebody there came about a separation and He withdrew to a distant abode. There may be some doubt as to the personality of the Creator, as we define personality; and while many of the epithets applied to him indicate a belief that He is the Compassionate One, Africans are not as a rule convinced that He is a loving Father. Some of them regard Him as Mother, rather than as Father. It is as a Power, that the Creator figures in African thought. Prayer may be offered to Him and, more rarely, offerings: but He is often regarded as so far removed from man that He must be approached, as a powerful earthly chief is approached, through intermediaries, i.e., the revered invisible members of the community. Africans readily confess that they know, and that their fathers knew, little of this Being, beyond the fact that He created all things; but they are aware of Him. The missionary never has to start by proving His existence. The Gospel comes as a revelation of God's purpose and of God's love in Christ. When He is made known through Christ, as one well-informed missionary puts it, they accept it as a tale is accepted which they had forgotten but know to be true. As a Congo woman said: "I knew there must be a God like that."



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There then is an avenue of approach to the African mind through his own rudimentary theology. We believe it shows again that God has not left Himself without witness in pagan Africa. It seems to us that the missionary should in his earliest preaching seek out and utilize all the African premonitions of God as embodied in his legends and myths. These might well be gathered into a volume to parallel the early narratives of the Old Testament. And it seems to us that the missionary has to do for the Africans very much what the prophets did for the Jews: make God a reality, in daily life and in the social consciousness, as righteous. "He has shown thee O man what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to love mercy, to do justly, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

In the African's Christian Creed we would lay emphasis upon God as the Almighty, the Ever-active, Living Lord; and upon Christ as primarily the Revealer, the mediator who restores the fellowship between God and man which was broken by human wrong-doing.

We have noted Spiritism as the second phase of African religion. The African accepts the fact of survival after death. He believes that the disembodied spirits (*mizimu*) of men live on in an invisible realm. Some well-informed observers would regard the resulting practices as of a social rather than of a religious character. So-called "living" and so-called "dead" belong to a single community, the invisible members being raised to a status which gives them enhanced ability to serve the visible members: the prayers offered to them are not so much prayers in our sense, as requests for help such as may be addressed to a father or chief: and the offerings are simply a matter of giving food and drink to people who need them. (They consume the essence not the form). Interpreted in this sense the term "ancestor worship" is a misnomer. The ancestors are not "worshiped" so much as revered, communed with, consulted. Yet it seems to us that while this phase of Spiritism is so far sociological, there are religious features in it, as in the trust that is given to a person's guardian spirit, as well as to others. Those, we believe are in error who see nothing but dread in the attitude of Africans towards these invisible members of the community. It is the evil spirits that inspire an unmitigated terror: others are revered and trusted; if there is dread, it is a dread lest misconduct may provoke them to wrath.

That this Spiritism has valuable social values we recognize. It is a consecration of the principle of continuity in human life; it tends to foster a conservatism that is salutary in many respects; it stabilizes custom; and it fosters respect for the aged.

How can these values be conserved in the Christian community? Can an intense reverence for the dead be regarded as incompatible with Christian faith? The danger is that lesser loyalty may usurp the

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supreme loyalty to Christ. We may expect that as the consciousness of God deepens and clarifies in the Christian African, all trust in the beneficence of ancestors will be transferred to God as revealed in Christ. No longer will it be thought necessary to approach a remote Creator through the mediatorship of our ancestors. The requests for help addressed to guardian, family and communal spirits will become prayer to the heavenly Father in the name of Christ. But while this true faith is growing, we would not too severely condemn a lingering belief in the aid of revered ancestors. Many good African Christians are, we know, helped by believing that their departed fathers and mothers are near and interested in them. We reverently believe that the heavenly Father would not take it amiss if one of his weaker children offered the name of his deceased earthly father in his prayers. And we think use should be made of the African's consciousness of being encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses: and we may at a later stage have suggestions to make on this.

The third phase of African religion is known as Dynamism, the belief in, and practice associated with belief in, impersonal power resident in and working through men and things. This is the ground of the African's implicit confidence in charms, protective amulets, and fortune-giving talismans; and also of his numerous taboos, the essence of which lies in the danger of doing, speaking, thinking, certain things. It is also the ground of the darkest feature of African life—the belief in the black magic of witchcraft.

There may seem to be absolutely nothing in Dynamism that is compatible with Christianity, that this is all mere "superstition" which must be sloughed off. "*Suman* (charms) spoil the Gods"—is reported to have been the dictum of a West African pagan priest. The implicit trust reposed by the African in the impersonal power of charms must be transferred to the personal power of God. That this transition is not readily made is seen among ourselves, where superstitions in regard to "mascots," "luck-charms," "luck," are still common. The belief in witchcraft, too, has died hard in Christian countries—if indeed it is yet dead. We need not wonder if among African Christians these beliefs are still found. We look to a deepening of liberating faith in the ever-active power of God, and a scientific teaching, to destroy them finally.

Meanwhile we recognize the values attached to Dynamism as seen in the taboos which safeguard much of the social behavior and morality. The essential point in taboo is that any infraction brings an automatic penalty,—it is not inflicted by a personal being. Fear of this, fear of offending the *mizimu* by disobedience, and also (in a less degree, perhaps) the fear of incurring the wrath of the Deity, lie at the root of the ethics of the African. With a developing conscious-



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ness of a righteous and loving God, the African will find a new motive for his conduct, and a desire not to transgress the Holy will of God will supplant fears of breaking taboos and offending ancestors. Out of this will come a realization of what sin really is, and a sense of the need of a Savior.

We suggest that some such Creed as the following might well be introduced into the African Church and used in public worship, as a symbol of the African Christian's personal faith. We believe this to be translatable—indeed, one of our number has put it into one of the Bantu languages.

### CREED

I put my trust in God, Creator of all things, Giver and Sustainer of all life; whose power is sensed in all that man can see; the fountain of all love and righteousness; the Father-Mother of mankind, whom our fathers saw as men see the sun through the morning mist; who has been fully made known through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God who became man; my Savior, my Redeemer, my Master.

I put my trust in the Holy Spirit of God who dwells in my heart to instruct, guide and strengthen me in the way of goodness.

I believe that in the Book of God I can learn how in the past He led His people into the way of righteousness and the knowledge of Him, and that therein I may hear Him today telling me of His love, of the way of Salvation, and of what He wishes me, as His child, to be and to do.

I believe in the Church of Christ, invisible and visible, which is made up of all true believers.

I believe that man was created in the image of God that he might know, love, and obey Him, and be led by Him through trust in Jesus Christ in the path of righteousness.

I believe that I have fallen short of the Will of God and have need of His forgiveness. I believe that this forgiveness is possible only through Jesus Christ.

I believe that, for the redeemed man, death is the gate opening into a more abundant life in the presence of God.

With these my beliefs I pray and toil that His Kingdom will come and His Will be done.

## II. WORSHIP

Worship is man's response to God's self-revelation. It is man's homage to the worth-ship of the divine majesty. When he is overwhelmed by a sense of God's power, of God's presence in the world and in his own life, man's response is a feeling of awe: he bows in reverence. True worship is co-terminous with life itself: it should become a settled attitude of the soul, not limited to times and seasons and places, not separate and apart from other activities. The true worship is of the spirit: the whole inner man assumes a posture of humility, of wonder, of gratitude. The mind worships as it seeks sincerely to know more of God and His working; the heart worships as it feeds upon the beauty of God's handiwork and aspires to love Him who is lovely; the will worships when it seeks to know

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God's purpose and obeys it. This inner worship of the spirit fitly expresses itself in symbolic acts and postures; which, if sincere and not merely formal, react again upon the inner feelings and intensify them.

Worship should, and does, come natural to Africans, conscious as they are that they live and move and have their being in a spiritual world. Their pagan prayers and ceremonies lack much that Western Christians associate with religious observances; but at least they did seek to enter into communion with the invisible.

### *Individual Worship*

Any notion that pagan worship in Africa is only performed in groups is contradicted by numerous records. Individual men and women approach their divinities, particularly the guardian spirits and at times God Himself. Sometimes no word is spoken, but the gesture of a finger or hand, the silent dropping of a few crumbs or drops of drink, the sending upwards of a puff of smoke from the tobacco pipe, are all grateful recognitions of an invisible presence. Often there is spoken prayer for help accompanied by a gift which expresses thanksgiving offered in an attitude of reverence.

This surely points to the desirability and possibility of fostering private devotions in Christian Africans. If it be but a gesture or an ejaculation—a word of gratitude, a plea for help—they may be encouraged to realize God's nearness to them all through the day, whatever they may be doing. Every missionary can testify to the intensity and sincerity of the Christian's private prayers, uttered aloud perhaps in the silence of the night. The intimacy with which he addressed his guardian spirit is retained when he learns that he can talk with God, no longer remote but near and attentive, but the intimacy is infused with a new humility. He no longer thinks of prayer only or chiefly as supplication for help.

Confession is not altogether a strange thing to Africans: there are occasions when the pagan knows that to obtain the help he or she needs from the divinities a frank and full revealing of past misconduct is necessary before his or her fellows. But now the Christian knows that to obtain forgiveness he must not cloak his sin but confess it to God. Adoration is not a strange thing to the African: it commonly takes the form of calling over the praise-titles which express eloquently the attributes of the divinity; and now the Christian can adore out of a fuller realization of what God is in Himself and in His relations to men. Nor was intercession a strange notion: it was common for Africans to pray for a relative's restoration to health. Now he learns to pray for others.

How far should the African be encouraged to use external aids



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to his individual worship? Reading played no part in his pagan life, but now the Christian will find help in perusal of the Bible. Some of the Psalms and other portions of Scripture will not only add to his vocabulary of prayer but give him models and suggest subjects for his thanksgiving. Perhaps collections of prayers, liturgical formulæ, may be helpful too, but a sincere spontaneity of utterance is more in keeping with the nature of the African. Written formulæ may be regarded as magical. As to posture, the African will naturally adopt the traditional attitude, whether of kneeling or bowing to the ground, he is accustomed to: but there is no need to insist upon a stereotyped fashion—if the prayer is in the heart it will issue from the lips, in any position. The African is not bound to places: he knew that he could approach his particular divinity at any time and in any place. This should be encouraged in the Christian, but just as in the African village there are places particularly associated with the presence of the divinities, so the Christian may be helped if he habituates himself to a definite spot in his house, or in the forest. Where, as in industrial centers, he finds it difficult to secure solitude, the Chapel should always be open for him. Corporate worship is essential, but man must also dissociate himself from his fellows and seek to place himself in direct personal contact with God. This individual worship is essential for spiritual growth and for meeting individual needs.

### *Family Worship*

Pagan Africans are accustomed as a family group to approach their divinities. Each family has its members in the invisible world, which is not distant: these continue to live in and around the village and to be interested in the embodied members. The father appeals to his forefathers, the mother to hers, on behalf of themselves and their children; and particular spots within the house are consecrated to this purpose.

This old religious attitude and practice lends itself admirably to sublimation. The Christian family will acknowledge God as its Guardian and Lord. Every event in the home will be sanctified by bringing it into relation with Him. From their early years, children will be led to associate His invisible presence with every home activity. African children, like all others, like to imitate their elders. Habits of worship can readily be taught to them, through participation with their parents. Essential Christian teaching can be drilled into them by means of song.

Definite times and places will be set apart for family worship. The place will be determined by the size and structure of the house. A cross might be built into the wall of a room or hung upon it: a picture might be displayed to mark the sacred corner. A cross might

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be erected in the yard and a vine trained to grow over it, the seed being ceremonially planted to illustrate the family's coöperation with God in the growth of food. Such a symbol would be a constant reminder of spiritual things and lead them to stop to say a prayer, or utter one silently in passing by.

Grace before meals and subsequent thanksgiving will be established as a daily practice. As the pagan African had his family ceremonial after the birth of a child, and at various stages of the child's growth, so will the Christian family. Thanks for recovery from illness, dedication of newly acquired tools, and of seed before planting, petition for God's blessing before departure on a journey, celebration of first-fruits and of the ingathered harvest, consecration of a new house,—all these may be occasions when the family, as a unit, makes a special approach to God. At each event, God will be glorified as the source of life and of all we possess, and each ceremony will renew the sense of stewardship, that we hold the soil and life itself as trustees and are responsible to God for making the most of His gifts.

So the Christian, like the pagan, will declare and enhance his love for the land and increase his desire to preserve and enrich its productive quality. The promotion of such practices would do much to compensate for satisfactions which the pagans derive from their ceremonies which are based, wholly or in part, upon magic. Nor would the invisible members of the community be forgotten in the Christian family worship.

These suggestions of family worship point to the important place occupied by parents in the Christian Fellowship. The parents are with the children daily where life is lived, not talked about. What they do and are, their love and devotion to each other and toward their children, their exemplification of what the Fatherhood and Motherhood of God means, are determining factors in the religious growth and character of the children. We have more to say of this nurture under the head of education.

### *Congregational Worship*

Individual and family worship culminates in the public church service: the act of corporate homage rendered to God by the united Christian community. In this supreme act the local body represents the great fellowship of the Universal Church engaged in praise and prayer. It may be few in numbers but it is part of the Ecumenical Church, gathered from *every tribe and tongue and people and nation*, some in heaven, some on earth. The idea of the visible and invisible members joining thus in praise to the God and Father of all should come home readily to Africans with their awareness of being sur-



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rounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Uniting for a communal participation in cultus is a familiar experience to many of them for they have such pagan assemblies. The clan-organization shows clearly that a union of brotherhood, within which no clansman lives for himself alone, is a reality to the African; and it has prepared him for the idea of the wider fellowship of the Church. If the exclusive clan-nishness of the native clan be overridden, it is helpful to the African to realize that as a Christian he is adopted into the world-wide Clan of Christ within which he is united in closest bonds with every member and their Great Head.

What ultimately will be the characteristic marks of the African branch of the Catholic Church we cannot pretend to say. We hope that it will exhibit the spirit and external features of a true Catholicism, loyal to all that is true in Christian tradition and yet reflecting the African ethos. The Church has been introduced into Africa by representatives of many denominations and hitherto its organization and forms of worship reveal its various origins; here the worship is severely Calvinistic, there it is highly ritualistic: while there is an underlying unity expressed in the use of the one Bible and the Lord's Prayer and in the administration of the Eucharist (in varying modes). We have no desire to see a strict uniformity of worship or organization throughout Africa. We think the African Christian should be free to borrow from any source the materials which may enrich their worship and not be forever tethered by the usages of the parent denominations; and we follow Madras in hoping that they will find within their own ethos much that will enrich and fortify their devotion.

Let us not forget that worship is an art and that like other arts it must be learned. Let us also remember its purpose. The service is not primarily for instruction. The reading of Scripture, the Sermon with its exposition of Scripture and its application to the hearts of the Christians and non-Christians, are means of grace, and should not be solely addressed to the emotions, for we may worship God with mind and will, as well as with the affections. Worship has psychological value in the formation of character. But the true purpose of worship, to which all else is ancillary, is *worship*, the expressing of the deepest feeling of adoration and thanksgiving in the most reverent and adequate manner. The praise we offer is our sacrifice and should be "without blemish" like ancient sacrifices. Missionaries have been criticized for secularizing religion. An arid intellectualistic atmosphere with its appeal only to the intellect is foreign to worship and particularly fails to touch the depths of the emotional, mystical-minded African. Every possible resource should be employed to stir his sense of wonder and feed his imagination. Emo-

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tion may need control but it should not be repressed. The public service should be so planned as to afford an outlet for deep feelings. This will be supplemented by other meetings for Christians, in some of which the Catechism will be thoroughly taught—for the seed sown on Sunday may thus be harrowed in by catechising. But meetings for testimony and prayer will give an outlet for emotion.

"Having learned," said the Madras Conference, "that in some cases missionaries are still eager to transplant the music, architecture of their home churches to the life of the younger churches, we would urge upon missionaries the duty of helping the younger churches to express their Christian life in forms that are part of their nation's heritage."

It becomes a question of serious import, how best we can weave together treasures of Christian devotion gathered from other lands into an African pattern.

### *Music*

Missionaries have introduced Western music and have translated or composed hymns. Where the writer is both musician and poet, and expert in the language, the result is admirable: but often the effect is lamentable because the beat of the music does not coincide with the stress on the African syllables. The African takes readily to the foreign melodies; his musical mind thinks harmonies and where the Tonic Sol-fa is taught he assimilates with avidity the European harmonic system, sometimes, unfortunately, to the detriment of his own. In some localities African tunes have been adopted and sung in church; and we believe that this practice should become universal. Africans can write poetry and can compose music; and we would wish to see these gifts largely employed in enriching the services. Such Christian songs will naturally fall into the responsory and antiphonal forms made familiar to Westerners by the Negro Spirituals: where one singer or one group opens with a line or stanza and all the rest join in the refrain or chorus. Most African songs have this idiosyncrasy which lends itself admirably to congregational use. Africans have a great gift for music. Spirituals are the most important cultural gift made by Negroes to America—and to the world. They are not purely African, either in music or in text, but their essential African character is evident to one who has listened to the African Negro's music. A great development of the art such as has taken place in America may also take place in Africa. We do not think that the Spirituals, if translated as they are, would serve African needs, for they were born out of an experience to which the Africans generally are strangers: "Bondage," it has been said, "is the condition of the Spirituals." But we may well expect that



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when Africans have absorbed Christianity they will sing it out with a similar deep emotional sincerity.

We think too that African musical instruments might well be used in Christian worship, in place of, or in addition to, the harmonium or organ. There are reed flutes, e. g., tuned to a seven-note scale on which elaborate melodies can be played; there are the small "pianos" with tuned tongues of tempered iron fixed to a wooden base upon a calabash resonator; there are the xylophones and drums of various kinds, as well as stringed instruments, all capable of development and use in connection with vernacular sacred songs.

### *Architecture*

Africa, in general, is at a disadvantage when compared with India, China or Japan in not having distinctive styles of architecture that are adaptable to Christian purposes. Its churches have followed of necessity foreign styles, often, it must be confessed, of an ugly barnic order. It may be that some creative genius, black or white, will evolve a style more in keeping than these with African ethos. Perhaps something in the village *bwalo*—the circular open shed which is the resort of the villagers—will provide a suggestion. In the North, where Egyptian influence has affected the building, there is more opportunity for adaptation.

When foreign churches are built we would that they be made as beautiful, as colorful, as possible and kept apart for worship, so as to foster a sense of supernatural presence. And if Africa cannot be represented in the structure, at least let the ornamentation be native, the African's skill in wood-carving being used to decorate doors, pillars and pulpit with suggestive designs based upon Scripture and the natural products of the country. Walls too might well be decorated with native designs in colored clays. Pictures appeal greatly to Africans and should be used extensively.

### *The Liturgy*

Africans generally associate religious (or magico-religious) rites with the events of human life. The notion of keeping religion boxed up as one department is quite alien to them. If we are to meet their needs we must recognize, as the early church recognized, that the Christian religion is concerned with the whole of life. The early Church instituted many holy-days and festivals and sought to hallow human activities by seeking divine blessing upon them. Initiation of children by baptism, the churching of women, confirmation, the marriage ceremony, burial of the dead, were all brought into the liturgy. And the Church did not scruple at adopting and transforming pagan festivals such as Easter and Christmas. Calvin purged his system of

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all such festivals and commemorations except the Lord's Day: as well as removing everything from church services that reminded worshippers of the extravagances and superstitions of Rome. In our American churches we have departed from his austerity and gone a long way back towards the earlier church. But in Africa we need to go further.

We say that to be true to African ethos the church in Africa should concern itself with the whole of life. It should seek to hallow all the various activities of the Christian community.

We believe it would conduce to reverent order in worship if a liturgical character were given to the services: and if the worship is to be real the people must take their part more or less all the time. The order should not be stereotyped, but plenty of variety introduced according to the season of the year. There would not only be special orders for the great festivals of the Ecumenical Church, such as Easter, Whitsunday and Christmas: but all the agricultural and other activities of the people should in their turn become occasions for worship. The beginning of the year (in some parts of Africa when the Pleiades appear and people prepare to cultivate their fields), the sowing, the first-fruits, the harvest, opening of fishing, and other seasonal activities should be celebrated. We have suggested that family events may be marked by special ceremonies in the home: but some of these, such as baptism, might more properly be part of the communal worship. Marriage will of course be performed in the church: and we should like to see some features of the African ceremony introduced into our ceremony, e.g., the rite of *madyanshima*, in which bride and bridegroom sitting side by side help each to food and eat together. The burial of Christians should be conducted in a manner very different from pagan practice: in contrast with the pagan lamentation, Christian mourners should in some way express their Christian hope in the face of death.

We append to this paper suggestions for liturgical services on the occasion of All Saints Day, First Fruits, and Harvest. An effort should be made, we think, to compose a liturgy on these lines to cover all the year and translatable into the African languages.

### III. ORGANIZATION

For a long time there has been general agreement that the aim of the Christian Mission is to establish a self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating Church. Some perhaps, whether in theory or in practice, would not subscribe to the plan of making that church thoroughly African. If it is to be such, it should be organized in a manner that does not appear foreign to the African. It should, on the contrary, conform to the type of organization which is familiar



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to the people. It is not really necessary that all the machinery of the church should be imported from America or Europe. The African is group-conscious and proves his organizing ability by the efficient tribal and other organizations he has built up through the past centuries. Some of these social structures are more highly developed than others. The kingdoms of Ashanti, Uganda, Ruanda, Burutse, Basutoland, Zululand, represent the highest type, but every tribe is organized on the basis of village communities, each with its elders and council. Instead of taking to Africa the Methodist or Congregational or Episcopal set-up with which we are familiar, why not mould the church externally on the lines of the Native civil organization?

Some of the most successful churches in Africa today are thus organized.

In the Uganda Protectorate the ecclesiastical structure is an almost exact duplicate of the civil structure, but quite independent of it. It is a self-governing body and self-supporting, i. e., the Africans themselves pay their clergy and preachers and put up their own churches and schools. It is also self-propagating. Very largely through the evangelistic zeal of the native Christians the church extended from the Kingdom of Buganda into the neighboring four Kingdoms which comprise the diocese. The civil government in Buganda was highly organized and centralized when the first white men appeared in the land over 60 years ago. At the head is the *Kabaka*, or king, with his three chief ministers. His Council or Parliament, the *Lukiko*, meets three times a year. Under the King there are county chiefs, district chiefs, village chiefs and headmen of hamlets. And each of these chiefs has his council to help him in managing local affairs. This, it should be emphasized, was purely native; and the leaders of the Mission were far-sighted enough to adopt a similar framework for the Church. Thus the small local Christian community has its catechist corresponding to the village chief; and these again are grouped into a parish with its clergyman who corresponds to the district chief; and each large district, comprising several parishes, has its Rural Dean, corresponding to the county chief. At the head of all is the Bishop, who hitherto has been British. He has his Diocesan Council which meets quarterly, corresponding to the *Lukiko*, and each district, parish and village has its council. A Synod meets every two years. The system comes natural to the people; it gives every Christian layman ample opportunity of taking part in the government of the church. It makes possible a gradual withdrawal of the Mission. The great majority of the clergy are native Africans: in Buganda all the rural deans are now African. The communicants of the Uganda Church number over 300,000.

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We have here an excellent example of how the organization of the Anglican Communion can be adapted to fit local conditions.

The Church of Basutoland which owes its foundation to the French Protestant Mission, has a similar structure. The home churches of the missionaries are of the Presbyterian type, but no attempt has been made to transplant their organization in entirety. They found an efficient civil structure, resembling that of Uganda and the Church follows its pattern very closely. The governing body is the *Seboka* in which missionaries and native pastors and lay representatives sit on terms of equality. Its president, who may be a missionary or *Musuto*, is elected for three years: and this seems to be the main difference from Uganda.

In many parts of Africa there are not such highly centralized civil governments and there, if the principle we advocate is carried out, the church organization will naturally differ. Where the government is an association of numerous villages, or small groups of villages, with leadership designated by the people, the church structure will be based on the small unit in voluntary association with other units, as in the Congregational plan. Where the government is regional with several chieftainships, each with his council, the church organization will be regional and each region considered a unit. In any case the essentially democratic nature of the African community will be reflected in the church.

### IV. EDUCATION

We now seek an answer to the question: What part can education play in forming a Christian African community which, while absorbing the best the whole world can give, yet preserves the values of the ethnical culture?

Let us keep in mind the difference between "schooling" and "education." Pagan Africa had no schools as we know them, but it had a system of education which, while for the most part it has been strangely ignored by Western Educators, is by no means despicable. By formal and informal methods young Africans were trained to take their place in the adult community. The accumulated culture of the past was transmitted to them. Technical training produced craftsmen of no mean order. Awareness of the existence of a Creator, respect for elders, reverence for the ancestors, all the elements of a good life, as Africans understand it, were inculcated. The aim was to educate the youth to become worthy citizens. As part and parcel of education, boys and girls were passed through ceremonies, including instruction and discipline, which marked the end of childhood and their integration into the tribe. Surely there is much, both in the content and method, of this African indigenous education that is worth conserving. We believe that missionaries who like Bishop



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Lucas have sought to Christianize these puberty rites are approaching them from the right angle: not that we would advocate the perpetuation of every detail, but we think it possible to purify and adapt the rites for the purpose of building a Christian community. And there are other elements in the indigenous training which are likewise adaptable.

This indigenous education has its limitations. Its essential aim of training good citizens is quite sound; but it does not provide all that the young African needs in these times of changing conditions. What he needs is a synthesis of the best the world has to offer—a scientific approach, a world-outlook—with his own traditional culture. In the Christian community we seek much the same as the pagan Africans seek, only on a higher plane. We seek a society of good citizens, men and women who in their youth are prepared to take their places, to fulfill their responsibilities; a community of God-fearing, industrious, healthy progressive people.

The school has a prominent place in this new community. But the academic school cannot stand alone: the home and activities outside the school, must be taken into account: they are all tied together in daily living.

The family is the nucleus of the African community and it is particularly subject to attack, and in danger of dissolution, by the new industrialization which calls the adult male members away from home for prolonged periods. Every effort must be made to keep the family intact and to enhance its importance in the Christian community. In the old system the education of the child was carried on largely within the family: so must it be now. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the worth of Christian parents in the home and on the education of women. "If you educate a man," said Aggrey, "you educate an individual: if you educate a woman, you educate a family." The program for enrichment of the home, and for the progressive training of the young in the home, must include building (by the people) of better houses, sanitary, vermin-proofed; instruction in child welfare, pre-natal and post-natal; improved water supply; the impartation of knowledge of nutrition: and the success of all this depends upon raising the economic level of the family. A "live-at-home" policy must be encouraged and made possible. The value of live-stock, the importance of agricultural methods that will secure a maximum of production with a minimum of injury to the soil, should be kept prominently before the people. Tribal tradition and reverence for the invisible members of the community promoted an ethic which is in many ways commendable. From these was derived in no small degree the strength of the African family-tie. Religion in the Christian home must in like manner be a binding force.

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The African Christian community should be a hundred per cent literate: and not the least important task of the school is to bring this about. It has other tasks. No doubt in the past Western education has been one of the main causes of maladjustment for Africans; but with a new vision of what education may be, the school can become a chief means of reintegration—of social and economic readjustment. The village teacher (or teaching family) who has an understanding of the old way of life, and a knowledge of the new, can bridge the gulf between parents belonging to the old régime and his pupils of the new generation. The task of the school becomes one of aiding both adults and children to fit into the new conditions in which they must live.

The new system of education, flooding in from a world where people have other controls than tribal taboos and customs, inevitably weaken many old beliefs and practices. Ofttimes the tendency of the young African is to imitate the European. Here educators may be thankful for the African's conservatism as well as for his well-known adaptability. Wisely-managed village schools may aid considerably in helping to conserve those old customs which still have value in the new situation and in frowning upon usages which hinder real progress. They can emphasize the fact that the old tribal culture, developed through the years to meet tribal needs, is worthy of pride and respect; and at the same time can point to innovations necessary to meet the demands of the changing world if the people are to hold their own in the line of advance.

The new education should plan to assist the people not only in material things, but also in the formation of a social code in which the beliefs and practices of an older period may be gradually harmonized with the truth revealed by Christianity and science. To this end the village school must obviously become part and parcel of the community, not a foreign something (or "a little nothing," as Thomas Jesse Jones might say) planted down by government or mission, quite alien and apart from its environment. The Village Council of Elders, with their Headman, should take a lead in managing the school. It should become a center of influence radiating throughout the community, both by means of the home-school activities of the pupils and the school-community activities of the parents. Let the native culture and art of the village have a real place in the school program: let the "book learning" of the school be related to the daily life of the villagers. Its influence will then permeate the community; the people will be interested in it, promote its program, help plow the school gardens and find a more abundant life through the manifold activities of the school.

The materials and activities of the curriculum will be determined



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by the life of the community and will promote improvements in that life. General industrial training, for example, will be given in a form which can be utilized in the village and with tools which can be secured there. In other words, the school graduate will be able to thatch a roof in his own village, as well as place a galvanized iron roof on a European structure. The normal industries, basketry, pottery, weaving, iron-work, will be raised to a new excellence in design and usefulness. Leaders in the school-community might well sponsor a coöperative shop where villagers would make odd repairs and find new skills. The School Council might well promote coöperative purchasing of plows or livestock and the coöperative selling of agricultural produce and articles of handicraft. In brief, the customary formal instruction of the school will be supplemented by hammer and plow, by needle and broom, all with a view to bringing more abundant life to the community. Reading and writing will not be neglected: an appreciation of literature will be fostered: but side by side with these, lessons in health, nutrition, hygiene, village sanitation, will be treated as of first-rate importance; there will be vocational training along agricultural and general industrial lines, stock raising, cultivation of worthy leisure-time interests and the arts of a sound home-life.

There will be no divorce between school and church; religion in school will not be merely a matter of instruction but an atmosphere pervading every activity. The school will be a natural way of entrance into the church.

When the late Lord Baden-Powell conceived the idea of an organization for Boy Scouts, the seed was implanted by what he had observed in Africa. It is a commentary upon the negligence which African indigenous education has been treated by western educators, that the Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements, and other similar movements, should thus have come out of Africa. That it should be widely introduced, in its developed form and with necessary adaptations, into the land of its birth is surely fitting. It would admirably supplement the village education we have tried to describe, by employing the zeal of the young Africans in manifold activities for the improvement of the community life. "Service" should be its motto everywhere.

No educational policy is sound which ignores the people's home language. This is widely recognized in Africa, but not everywhere: there are governments which insist that a foreign tongue be used in schools, not only as a subject, but as the medium of instruction, to the exclusion of the mother tongue. Even where the Mission has to labor under this limitation, we think that steps should be taken to carry on vernacular work outside the schools among the

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young. And in this connection, we press the need for vernacular literature and for encouraging Africans themselves to write books which shall not only be instructive but thrillingly interesting.

We realize that the program we have sketched depends upon the training of a large corps of African teachers, men and women, who, by their example and by the enthusiasm they inspire in their pupils, will largely hold the future of Africa in their hands. The needs of the young Africans should determine the type of training given. They need not only all the necessary techniques but a vision of what African communities may become: healthy, industrious, prosperous, Christian.

### V. SOCIAL CUSTOMS

The native African community is characterized by its solidarity. The conduct of its members is strictly regulated by a body of traditional customs, laws, codes of etiquette, governed in part by sanctions of a magico-religious nature and in part by pressure of public opinion. Individual behavior is not left to caprice: it is strictly ordered. That some members kick over the traces, is true; but this does not alter the fact that Africans have an ideal of what is right and proper, and that misconduct, as they define it, is reprehended. "What do you mean when you speak of a 'good village'?" a pagan African was asked, and he replied: "A good village is where the head-man and the elders are respected by all: and where they too have regard for all, even for the children. If there is even one person who belittles another person or works harm, then the village is spoiled."

The African's ideal is of a society in which the good of all the members is to govern the conduct of individuals.

The aim of the Christian mission in Africa is not merely the conversion of individuals but the establishment of Christian communities. These are inevitably small at first: they grow by the accretion of individuals; our hope is that they will gather into their sweep whole indigenous communities so that finally in any locality the place occupied by the pagan community will be taken by a Christian community. The period of transition is one of danger—the danger being, that by the drawing away of individuals from the pagan society, its structure will be weakened and destroyed without a new consolidated society being built in its place. This danger would be obviated if the whole tribe could be brought at once into the Church by a mass movement: but even then problems would arise, as they arise now, in regard to the relation of the new life to the old.

The Christian community will have its own laws and customs and code of etiquette. The sanctions will be different. The Christian's



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conduct will be governed not by taboo and obedience to the ancestors: but by his enlightened conscience, by his loyalty to Christian principle, by his fear of God. Unless he withdraw from the tribe and submit only to the laws imposed by the European suzerain, he will be subject to the customary law of the tribe, which, unless and until the tribe is Christian, may demand observances and abstinences which go contrary to his enlightened conscience. There is a period of maladjustment during which both the Christians and their missionary guides need our lively sympathy.

When we ask that the Church in Africa be indigenous, we mean, for one thing, that the Africans remain African, that they do not take over indiscriminately the social customs of the Americans and Europeans who planted the Gospel among them. But here we face a problem of the utmost gravity. Some tribal customs are manifestly incompatible with Christianity: no man can observe them and be a Christian in any true sense of the term. Other customs and laws are quite compatible with Christianity, but they are sanctioned by the belief in taboo and the so-called ancestor-worship. Can the customs and laws be retained but be obeyed with other motives—can they receive new sanctions?

In the first class, there are such practices as infanticide and its particular form, prevalent in some areas, the killing of twins. The practice is not motivated by cruelty, but by a belief that children born in an abnormal manner, or who cut their teeth in certain ways, are bad omens and will bring bad luck to the community. Quite obviously no Christian can acquiesce in the killing of his children and if they accept a Christian view of the universe men and women will cease to believe that, e. g., their child brings them bad luck by cutting first a tooth in the upper rather than in the lower jaw. Flagrant crimes like this, and others such as killing people at funerals, against which the law of the European suzerain is actively opposed, will die out: they do not constitute the chief problem.

The second class of practices includes a large number of taboos—this thing must not be eaten, this thing must not be said, this thing must not be done, because of some danger that accompanies the action. For some of these there is no rational justification; e. g., that young people must not eat eggs because they will be sterile or impotent; and education will gradually destroy the practices. In other taboos the action is right while the motive is false; e. g., the placing of a talisman in a field protects it from robbery. The Christian will abstain from stealing from a higher motive than fear of the automatic reaction of the power contained in the charm. Certain forms of adultery are prohibited, not because the act is wrong in itself, but because they will have some magical effect: again the

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Christian will abstain, but from other motives. Many sins prohibited by Christianity, such as covetousness and resentment, are also prohibited by African paganism on magico-religious grounds. The Christian will not covet or nurse resentment, but on other grounds. In all such cases the social morality of the Christian will be sanctioned by substituted motives. He will continue to act, or abstain from acting, just as his pagan brother does, but for a different reason. Fear may still guide him; but it is a salutary fear, and not irrational.

Many African social customs may well be adopted by the Christian community on this principle of a substituted motive. There are certain religious observances in regard to the unborn child, the infant and its mother, all directed towards securing their well-being. When the mother emerges from her seclusion the father, who until now has not been allowed to fondle the child, takes it, offers it gifts, and so acknowledges it as his own. The relatives and neighbors also bring gifts and are allowed to handle the child. Then comes the day when the child is named: and where the people believe in reincarnation, various names are taken to ascertain which of the forbears has returned in the flesh, and it is named accordingly. The child, which when born was regarded as something less than fully human, is now a person and as such is acclaimed a member of its group. Behind some of these practices, if not all, there are undoubtedly beliefs of a magico-religious nature; but the Christian community might well take them over. The naming ceremony could be merged into the rite of Christian baptism; or, where infant baptism is not observed, take the form of a dedication service in the home or in the church.

We would here register our belief that African Christians should not feel bound to give their children Biblical or other foreign names: their own are beautiful enough.

Some African practices which have no essential religious significance are often condemned merely because they appear objectionable to foreigners. Dancing for example. In Africa—as in America—there are dances *and* dances. Some, in which the sexes dance separately, are healthful and pleasantly exciting, providing good exercise and relaxation under a clear moon after a hot and monotonous day. These may well be encouraged, and even taught in school, to conserve that sense of rhythm which is so strong in Africans. Other dances of a distinctly lewd or obscene nature will not be tolerated in an enlightened Christian community.

In regard to dancing, as in regard to other customs, the right principle for the missionary is not to adopt a hasty judgment, but to trust to the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and consciences of the Christians. They will come to know best which practices are



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to be condemned or tolerated or encouraged: meanwhile let the missionary exercise patience and a wise tolerance.

It is in regard to the relations of the sexes that the most difficult questions arise. African members of the Madras Conference asked the International Missionary Council to institute research and secure preparation of helpful literature for guidance to the African Church.

In dealing with this complicated problem we will quote extracts from a paper presented by our teacher, Dr. Edwin W. Smith, to a conference called in New York to consider the request of the Africans.

"We have to recognize that Africans—pagan Africans—realize the need of curbing the sex impulse which if unrestrained would render communal life impossible. They do seek to restrain it. There are occasions when absolute continence is enforced. That they succeed in their curbing of the sex impulse is no more true of the Africans than it is of ourselves. They strive in vain against hot blood. But let us frankly recognize that the Africans have their ideals in these matters and do try to attain thereto.

"The African sexual code appears in some respects shockingly deficient according to our ideas and in other respects irksome and futile. The rules of exogamy, for example, which debar large numbers of people from courtship and matrimony. Some cousins may marry; others may not. There are prolonged periods of sexual abstinence connected with pregnancy and lactation which seem to many Europeans unnecessary and burdensome. On the other hand, our practices must often appear immoral or disgusting to Africans. What are we to do about these things? Are we to frown upon the African code simply because in some respects it is different from our own? Or are we to adopt and strengthen all African rules such as are not absolutely incompatible with Christian principles?

"The destruction of respect for old established principles is always dangerous. We are not to conclude that anything is necessarily wrong because it is different from what we do. It is surely not our business to create sins. We have to ask ourselves by what standard we are to measure an alien code of morals. What are our own standards? In so-called Christian countries, and even within the Christian Church itself, at various periods, the standard has differed. In the mission field are we to aim at the most rigid definition of sexual morality: and put under discipline every person who fails to keep to it? Or are we to hold up our morality (when we have defined it) as an ideal to be attained not without effort?

"If we accept the idea of taking our stand upon principles common to Christianity and African paganism, strengthening the African's natural morality before attempting to establish a new one—where will this lead us?

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"Certain pre-nuptial practices which would probably be condemned by all of us if indulged in by Christians in America are regarded as innocuous and even beneficial by Africans. Even in tribes where only within marriage are full sexual relations legally sanctioned, these practices are approved and encouraged. What position is the Church to take towards *ukumetsha* and analogous customs? Are they to be legislated against by the Church; or is a certain amount of tolerance preferable to rigidity on this point? Experience shows that rigid seclusion of boys and girls may result in the development of perversions and, above all, of homosexuality. This vice is as a rule abhorrent to the African pagan; in some tribes it is unknown; it becomes common only in such conglomerations of men as are found in the Johannesburg mine compounds. Where it exists, the vice is not easily stamped out, partly because it is often a compensation for the strict chastity of the unmarried girls. This, for instance, makes homosexuality so tenacious among the followers of Islam. Is our Christian community bettered if homosexuality and prostitution are substituted for such practices as *ukumetsha*?

"There are other recognized customs which present a problem to the missionary. There is a kind of *cicisbeism* which in Bwila is named *lubambo*. There are various forms of ritual sexual intercourse for the purposes of purification. There is the common practice of showing hospitality to an honored guest by placing one's wife at his disposal. There is the custom called by the Sutos *kenelo* by which access to a wife is allowed to certain relations of the husband. There is the custom which allows an impotent husband to consign his wife temporarily to a friend so that the legitimate desire for children may be satisfied. Many such customs present a serious problem to the missionary.

"Africans condemn adultery in the abstract. We may choose their recognized term for it when we translate the commandment; but the legalized practices to which we have just referred do not fall within their definition of adultery and it is not easy to show our Christians why they should be prohibited.

"Africans severely condemn sexual intercourse between members of certain social groups: it is labelled incest. But intercourse between members of other groups would not be accounted adultery. English law allows marriage with a deceased wife's sister, but previous to marriage any intercourse with her would be regarded as adultery. But Africans cannot always see any crime or sin in intercourse with one's wife's sister outside of wedlock. It is the prevalent practice in some tribes and not socially condemned. As one missionary writes: 'The persistence of this pattern in the Native mind is so great that one of the frequent offences for which Church discipline

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has to be applied among converts is adultery with a younger sister of the wife.'

"Almost everywhere in Africa certain goods are transferred to the bride's people from the bridegroom's people at marriage. There is no uniformity in the character or quantity of these goods. They may take the form of cattle to the number of twenty or more; or of cowries to the number of 10,000; or of arrows or pots of honey; or of gin up to 50 puncheons. Labor may be given instead of goods; or there may be an exchange of women. Africanists are not yet agreed upon the significance of what they call 'bride-price' or 'bride-wealth.' Upon one point there is a large measure of agreement, though not unanimity: this transference of wealth is not a commercial transaction. Africans do not, as the older missionaries alleged, buy their wives. I am open to believe that there is much more in it than we have yet discovered, but I agree with Mr. Soga, himself an African, who declares that *ukulobola* is the Bantu woman's charter of liberty. It is instituted by the community to enhance and emphasize the social value of marriage. Apart from it, in the eyes of perhaps the majority of Africans, there is no legal marriage.

"Some of the Missions have frowned upon the practice; they put under discipline any Church member who allows it. Other Missions frankly recognize it as part of the Christian rite. Whether the Missions allow it or not, it would seem that Christian Africans generally continue the practice, sometimes in barely camouflaged forms. Monica Hunter tells us that in South Africa most educated Bantu are in favor of the retention of the custom; and she quotes a leading Xhosa newspaper which urged the Christian churches to make a definite declaration in favor of *ukulobola*. I could quote the opinion of well educated Africans who lament that where *ukulobola* has been prohibited, marriage has degenerated.

"The worst feature of the custom arises from the fact that the woman is, according to customary law, bound by the contract, which usually she had no share in making, so long as the cattle remained in the possession of her relatives. The death of her husband did not release her; she passed with the rest of the inheritance to the heir, perhaps her husband's eldest son (not her own son) or brother or uncle. The result of this was that no widow was ever left unprotected; on the other hand she might be forced into a union which was utterly repugnant to her. Sometimes her relatives would pay back the cattle; but unless they did so, she had no remedy in law. And she had no legal right to her children. Some tribes take the children into account; the cattle are returnable only in proportion to the children the widow has borne; if they are numerous no cattle are returned. The custom might well be reformed on these lines,



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with the aim of securing the complete liberty of the widow to choose a second husband if she so desires.

"I come now to polygamy. In its two forms, polyandry and polygamy, this is a species of marriage which is neither allowed by European law nor countenanced by the Christian Church. Is it too bold to ask whether there is an inherent, necessary opposition between polygamy and Christian doctrine? As the Report of the Africa group points out, the question is being raised in Africa whether monogamy is essential to Christianity or is merely a factor in European civilization—whether in the practice of polygamy there is anything radically incompatible with a vital faith in Christ, and living of a true life in fellowship with Him. The Report argues strongly that the Church must maintain its insistence on monogamy. Do we endorse this argument? If so, are we to preach monogamy as an ideal to be reached after; or are we to make it an absolute rule in the Church? Are we to make allowances and exercise tolerance in view of the evident difficulties with which we are faced? As the Report truly points out, insistence on monogamy is one of the great bars (some would say it is the most formidable bar) preventing the entrance of men into the Christian Church. It hints broadly at what many of us know, namely that concubinage is largely practised by Church members. Is this hypocrisy more tolerable than a limited polygamy? Is the prostitution, ignored if not tolerated in our homelands, worse than polygamy, open and acknowledged?

"The relegation of large numbers of women to sexual frustration is an evil of our civilization, an evil against which many women rebel who maintain a woman's right to bear children. Under polygamy African society is free from that evil. If we weigh the two evils in a balance which is heavier?

"We may adopt as our own the argument contained in this Madras Report, but that will not close the matter. We shall still be faced with difficult problems. If a man who according to the customary law has honorably married two women or more and has had children by them—if, being sincerely drawn towards Christ, he desires to be admitted into the fellowship of the Church, what is to be done with him? I find it impossible to reconcile with the humaneness of Christ that the man should be admitted only on the condition of sending away all but one of these women—perhaps the youngest and prettiest of them; women who may have a warm affection for him and who have in any case served him faithfully and borne his children. What is the position of such women when sent away bearing a stigma of disgrace? Psychologically and socially their position is lamentable. Can the treatment they receive at the command of the Church be called Christian?

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"Another problem concerns the wives of a polygamist when they wish to become Christians while the husband remains pagan. Can we endorse the opinion of some missionaries that these women are living in sin and that before they can be admitted into the Church they must leave their husband?

"The practice of the Church in Africa varies in these matters. Some would admit a polygamist to full fellowship; some would admit him as a catechumen; some would only bar a polygamist from official position.

"In any inquiry that is made on this subject one phase of the question must certainly not be overlooked. Bound up with polygamy is the custom which ordains that a man must cease to have intercourse with his wife during the period of lactation: some tribes would say that intercourse must cease from the day that pregnancy is indubitably ascertained. This may mean that a husband and wife are sexually separated for perhaps three years or even more. For the polygamist it is easy; he has other wives. For the pagan monogamist, it is still easy: he has access to other women. But what is the position of the Christian man? The custom is ordained for the sake of the woman and her child. She is saved from the pernicious situation in which European women are placed—the situation of bearing a child every year or two. The child is not hindered from feeding at the mother's breast. Is this excellent custom to be retained in the Christian Church? We know that Christian women who bear children at less intervals than two or three years are exposed to the scorn and ridicule of their pagan neighbors. Are they to be taught to disregard public opinion because they are in the right? What about the husband? Does the Church really expect him to remain continent for three years? Are we to teach that the old African custom is without value and should be violated? Or are we to close our eyes to the man's straying after other women? Or are we to encourage methods of birth control other than those with which Africans are familiar? Or are we to sanction or ignore the practice of abortion common among African women who conceive when they should not?"

The many questions raised in this quotation can be finally answered only by the African Church. But meanwhile missionaries have the responsibility of instructing and guiding the Church towards a Christian solution of the problems.

### CONCLUSION

This paper is suggestive, not exhaustive. We have before our vision a Church in Africa that is self-propagating, self-governing, self-supporting — and fundamentally African; indigenous, not

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foreign: rooted in the soil of the African ethos: a spiritual home for the Africans. What that all implies is too great a subject to be adequately dealt with in a single paper: nor are we qualified to set forth and discuss all the problems involved. We can only urge the vital importance of thinking through the implications of what the Madras Conference said about the indigenous Church.

And we close by pointing out that if missionaries are to instruct and guide the African Christians along this path, they must themselves be prepared by a thorough knowledge of the situation. We hope that the time may soon come when no man or woman will be sent out to the African mission field without having received specific training for their task.

### WORSHIP SERVICE FOR FIRST FRUITS

*Place:* Community center or church.

*Time:* Before the first fruits are eaten; the day to be determined by village elders.

*Call to Worship* (By Chief, Pastor or village leader): Months past we dedicated ourselves with our seeds, soil, and hoes to our great Chief. We prayed for rain and sunshine. Today we have gathered to acknowledge again in the presentation of first fruits, that we are his people.

*Hymn of Praise:* "We Plow the Fields and Scatter" (or some native hymn).

We plow (hoe) the fields, and scatter the good seed on the land,  
But it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand;  
He sends the snow (wind) in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,  
The breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.

*Refrain:* All good gifts around us are sent from Heaven above;  
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord for all His love.

He only is the Maker of all things near and far;  
He paints the wayside flower, He lights the evening star;  
The winds and waves (moon) obey Him, by Him the birds are fed;  
Much more to us, His children, He gives our daily bread (mush).

We thank Thee, then, O Father, for all things bright and good.  
The seed-time and the harvest, our life, our health, our food;  
No (small) gifts have we to offer, for all Thy love imparts,  
But that which Thou desirest, our humble, thankful heart.

—Tune: Dresden, 7676D, with Refrain—Matthias Claudius, 1782. Trans. by Jane M. Campbell, 1861.

*Prayer of Praise:* O Father—God of the fields, who sendest the sunshine and rain, who causest the seed to spring forth and bud, we give Thee grateful praise today for the good fruits of the earth with which Thou has rewarded our toil. For the maturing fields of grain, trees laden with fruits, gardens rich with vegetables and flowers, for the cattle on a thousand hills, we give Thee thanks. For the children and youth growing into sons and daughters of God in our homes, we praise Thee. For the privilege of coöperating with Thee in tending and enjoying the good earth, we lift our hearts in praise and adoration. (Prayer by Rev. E. K. Ziegler.)



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*Words from the Book:* The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord, thy God. (Exodus 23:19.)

*Appropriate message* by the Chief, Pastor, or village leader:

*Presentation of the First Fruits:*

*Leader:* Maize we bring

*Response:* Lord, to Thee. Wilt Thou accept it, O Lord!

*Leader:* Beans we bring

*Response:* Lord, to Thee. Wilt Thou accept them, O Lord!

*Leader:* Peanuts we bring

*Response:* Lord, to Thee. Wilt Thou accept them, O Lord!

(Etc., etc., until all the first fruits have been placed, each with its own kind, on the altar or other designated place.)

*Prayer of Consecration:* From our parents we have learned many customs which came from Thee, our great Chief. So again this day we know that not only the Spirit of God but also the spirits of our forefathers rejoice as we have assembled for worship. Since the day of planting we have thanked Thee for sunshine and rain. Today we acknowledge Thee in the bringing of the first fruits of an abundant harvest which is seen standing in the fields. As we now make our offering unto Thee, we ask that Thou wilt accept the gift, and be Thou present with us until the harvest has been gathered into the granaries.

*Response:* Verily, be Thou present with us until the harvest has been gathered into the granaries.

*Instruction from the Leader:* Many moons have passed since your seeds were consecrated to the great Chief. He has given you rain and sunshine, strength and wisdom. Your faithfulness has been rewarded by an approaching harvest. Again today you have acknowledged the Chief with these first fruits. Go now to your villages and partake of the fruit of your toil; and may you so walk that the Spirit of God will be pleased to walk by your side.

*Response:* May we so walk that the Spirit of God will be pleased to walk by our side.

As different village groups form, the following could be sung en route:

*Leader:* The man who plants

*Response:* He it is who eats with joy.

*Leader:* The man who eats

*Response:* He it is who digs with joy.

*Leader:* The man who digs

*Response:* He it is who watches with joy.

*Leader:* The man who watches

*Response:* He it is who reaps with joy.

*Leader:* The man who reaps

*Response:* He it is who offers with joy.

*Leader:* The man who offers

*Response:* He it is whom God blesses.

*Leader:* The man blessed

*Response:* He is the friend of the Chief.

NOTE: Songs are adaptations of those presented by Julian S. Rea, of Kambini.

# THE CHURCH CONFERENCE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS

## WORSHIP FOR HARVEST FESTIVAL

*Time:* At the Close of Harvest.

*Place:* The Church.

*Call to Worship by Chief or Pastor:* We have gathered today to offer the fruits of our labors to the Giver of all life. We praise Him for his goodness unto us and rejoice in the abundance with which he has favored us. In recognition of our dependence upon Him we bring our offerings and tithes into his house this day.

*Hymn of Praise.*

*Responsive Reading:*

*Leader:* We thank Thee, Lord.

*Response:* We thank Thee, Lord.

*Chorus*            We give thanks,  
                      We give thanks.

*Leader:* We have lived another year.

*Response:* We have lived another year.

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* You blessed us greatly.  
                      *Response:* You blessed us greatly.

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* With sun and rain.  
                      *Response:* With sun and rain.

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* We thank Thee with corn.  
                      *Response:* We thank Thee with corn.

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* We thank Thee with rice.  
                      *Response:* We thank Thee with rice.

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* We thank thee with peanuts.  
                      *Response:* We thank Thee with peanuts.

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* We thank Thee with cotton.  
                      *Response:* We thank Thee with cotton.

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* Lord receive us.  
                      *Response:* Lord receive us.

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* We will serve Thee,  
                      *Response:* We will serve Thee,

*Chorus:*        *Leader:* All through our lives  
                      *Response:* All through our lives.

*Chorus*

*Presentation of Native Drama:* (Such as "Why the Chimes Rang.")

*Words from the Book:* Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3: 10-12.)

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*Presentation of tithes and offerings during the following hymn:* (Set to native music.)

*Leader:* Corn we bring

*Response:* Lord, to Thee, wilt Thou bless us, O Lord.

*Leader:* Bananas we bring

*Response:* Lord, to Thee, wilt Thou bless us, O Lord.

*Leader:* Wheat we bring

*Response:* Lord, to Thee, wilt Thou bless us, O Lord. (Etc., etc., etc. The leader could mention the various things which he saw presented as the people continued with their gifts.)

*Prayer of Consecration:* In recognition of thy goodness unto us, our great Chief, we return to Thee a portion of the harvest which came from Thy hands. The rains fell, the sun shone, the seed sprang forth, the blade and then the ear were formed. Thou art our Benefactor. Accept these our tithes and offerings and grant that the story of Thy love as revealed in Thy son Jesus Christ may be told to other families and tribes because we have been faithful in our stewardship. Use our gifts and lives in the building of a world more in keeping with Thy nature. And now we wait for the smile of Thy approval by Thy continued presence with us. May the Spirit of the great Chief be pleased to abide with us.

*Response:* May the Spirit of the great Chief be pleased to abide with us. As the people return to their villages the following is sung:

*Leader:* The man who plants

*Response:* He it is who rejoices greatly.

*Leader:* The man who digs

*Response:* He it is who rejoices greatly.

*Leader:* The man who builds

*Response:* He it is who rejoices greatly.

*Leader:* The man who harvests

*Response:* He it is who rejoices greatly.

*Leader:* The man who gives

*Response:* He it is who rejoices greatly.

(Etc., etc., etc.)

NOTE: The songs are those used by Julian S. Rea, of Kambini.

### ALL SAINTS DAY

The Church is decorated with candles and flowers. A tall white candle in the center front standing by itself symbolizes Christ; other tall candles in front, symbolize apostles, and others among the flowers, in the windows, missionaries and native Christians who have given their lives in the service of Christ.

The school children are given candles as they enter the church to be lighted later on in the service.

*Hymn of Praise:* (Choir answered by children.)

*Prayer of Thanksgiving:* (For all saints, past, present, and children who have gone on to be with Jesus.)



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*Scripture:* Hebrews 11; John 8:12; 9:5.

Have someone tell briefly about each saint as he lights the candle, symbolizing that saint, from the candle in the center, symbolizing Christ, the Light of the world.

The school children holding the unlighted candles form on either side of the tall lighted candle representing the Light of the Gospel. They form a complete circle about the room. They kneel in a prayer of consecration. One leads in prayer, a sentence or two at a time. The children respond: (1) We praise Thee! (2) We bless Thee! (3) We worship Thee! (4) We give glory to Thy name!

The children stand. The ones nearest to the center candle light their own candles from it. They give their own testimony of what Christ means to them and their desire to pass the Light of the Gospel on to others. Then the light is passed from one to the other until all the candles are lighted.

The children sing antiphonally a song about the different saints, different ones taking the solo parts, representing the martyrs and saints. Each time the soloist sings of a saint he lifts his candle on high. When the response is sung, the lighted candles are lifted.

Prayer by the leader thanking God for the Light of the Gospel and for all those who have given their lives for the sake of the Gospel.

*Recessional:* "Following the Light."

### HYMN OF PRAISE

(Choir answered by children)

*Choir:*

"O Light of the Great God  
Which has shined in our darkness

*Children:*

Lord of life, we pray

*Choir:*

Light for us the Fire of Life  
In this our House of Prayer

*Children:*

O Lord—look upon us

*Choir:*

We lift to Thee our lights

*Children:*

Even our hearts,  
Let them be lit up with Thy Light.

*Choir:*

Great God of all goodness,  
Lord of Life,  
Spirit of Holiness,  
Thou art worthy to be worshipped by all men.

*Children:*

Great Lord—we children worship  
We children worship  
We kneel before Thee,  
We worship, we worship."

(Printed in U. S. A.)